

Approved on January 31, 2005

Illinois Early Learning Council

December 6, 2004

100 W. Randolph, James R. Thompson Center, Room 2-025 Chicago
Stratton Office Building, Room 349-C, Springfield
9:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

MEETING MINUTES

Members Present: Ann Alvarez, Martha Arntson, Lori Baas, Gayla Boomer, Barbara Bowman (for Arne Duncan), Constance Brown, Ellen Collins Bush (for Wanda Newell), Mary Ellen Caron, Tim Carpenter (for Mark Donahue) Martina Casey, Representative Elizabeth Coulson, Claudia Fabian, Marilu Galan, Phyllis Glink, Senator Don Harmon, Kay Henderson, Judy Johnson, Gwendolyn Kenner Johnson (for Carol Adams), Lanita Koster, Janet Maruna, Cordelia Meyer, Harriet Meyer, Janice Moenster, Cynthia Moreno (for Bryan Samuels), Claudia Quigg, Elliot Regenstein, Senator Carol Ronen, Carolyn Newberry Schwartz, Adele Simmons, Rory Slater (for Eric Whitaker), Leo Smith, Luz Maria Solis, Jerry Stermer, Jaci Vaughn (for Barry Maram), Judy Walker Kendrick, Maria Whelan, Katie Williams (for Joyce Thomas), Kay Willmoth (for Joyce Thomas)

Absent: Ellen Alberding, Guy Alongi, George Davis, Representative Deborah Graham, Richard Jones, James Kaplan, Samuel Meisels, Louanner Peters

- **Welcome**

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. by Harriet Meyer.

- **Adoption of Minutes**

Elliot Regenstein asked that the Council review minutes from the previous meeting. Jerry Stermer made a motion to adopt the October 25, 2004 Early Learning Council meeting minutes. Luz Maria Solis seconded the motion, and it passed by unanimous vote.

- **Committee Reports**

Harriet Meyer asked that the Linkage and Integration, Expansion, and Workforce committees present a report of their work.

Maria Whelan presented recommendations approved by the Linkage and Integration Committee for consideration by the Council. The License-Exempt Workgroup of the Linkage and Integration Committee developed a series of recommendations (see Appendix 1) for reaching out to children cared for in license-exempt (family, friend, and neighbor) homes because the quality of care and learning opportunities in these settings can significantly affect children's development and school readiness. In the context of Preschool For All, strategies to reach these children should include (1) working to decrease barriers to enrollment of these children in part-day early education programs in addition to the care they receive by their family, friend or neighbor caregiver, and (2) the delivery of educational support programs that enhance the quality of care in license-exempt care settings.

- Luz Maria Solis expressed concern that providers in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) need to provide photo identification and proof of their social security number to

participate, which might have impacts on undocumented caregivers. Gwendolyn Kenner Johnson replied that this is not an additional requirement; all providers need to provide this information in order to be paid.

- Luz Maria Solis asked who will provide training to license-exempt providers. Maria Whelan responded that the workgroup has no final recommendations about that yet, but will look to build on community strengths by working with local networks and provider associations to find appropriate training.
- Judy Walker Kendrick asked whether the model for working with license-exempt providers was focused on helping children in those settings attend a school-based program for part of the day. Gwendolyn Kenner Johnson stated that many models are being considered, and no decision has yet been made on that issue.
- Barbara Bowman asked that model efficacy be examined before any models are recommended. Gwendolyn Kenner Johnson assured her that the License-Exempt Workgroup will look into this. Maria Whelan added that the focus of this work is to both recognize approaches to build caregiver capacity and to have a strategy in place that will ensure that 3- and 4-year-olds begin school ready to learn.
- Claudia Quigg thanked the group for their work and asked if they have plans to examine linkage and integration issues for children aged birth to three. Jerry Stermer added that this is a concern, especially around issues of transportation, and remarked that a transportation workgroup will be convened in the near future.

Dea Meyer presented the report from the Workforce Committee. The committee continues to look at credentials for lead teachers, and has put together a work group to clarify issues around the Type 04 and the Level 5 credentials. Dea stated that the committee will be meeting on January 20, 2005 to revise their recommendations, which will be presented to the Early Learning Council at the January 31, 2005 meeting.

Harriet Meyer presented the report from the Expansion Committee. She reported that the Expansion Committee met to review preliminary Preschool For All budget assumptions and cost estimates. Transportation costs and Preschool For All governance were also briefly discussed. Committee members concluded that both of these issues are complex and require more work and thought by diverse stakeholders. The Committee has decided to convene two time-limited workgroups to examine issues of transportation and governance over the winter months. Harriet asked that any member interested in joining either of those workgroups contact Margie Wallen to indicate their desire to participate.

- **Child Care Rates Presentation**

Harriet Meyer asked Gwendolyn Kenner Johnson to present information about the plan to revise child care rates in the Child Care Assistance Program. Harriet invited any interested Council member to move to incorporate the plan into the Council's formal Preschool For All recommendations.

Gwendolyn Kenner Johnson presented information on child care reimbursement rates. She stated that Senate Bill 2900 directed the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), in consultation with its Child Care and Development Advisory Council, to examine and revise rates in the Child Care Assistance Program. The report has been accepted by the department, and it will now be submitted to the Governor's Office. She reported that the committee reviewed base reimbursement rates and recommended changes in rates in county sub-groupings. In addition, the group recommended revising

age classifications for reimbursement so that they will be aligned with licensing standards, and making the special needs add-on available to all who provide services to children with disabilities or developmental delays. The total rate increase cost is \$92 million, with a proposed phase-in over 2-years.

- Maria Whelan reiterated that this work on rates and reimbursement was required by Senate Bill 2900. She stated that these recommendations have a slightly different focus and timeline than does Preschool For All and the Early Learning Council. She said she would like the Council to know about the rates work and support it, but that it should proceed forward on its own merits. She recommended that the Early Learning Council reference the rates report and work on creating linkages to Preschool For All for children in childcare.
 - Dan Lesser stated that he believes that this matter should be of great concern to the Early Learning Council. He reported that by law, children and families using child care subsidies must have equal access to child care providers, but current rates do not provide that. He suggested that quality of care be examined in all settings.
 - Elliot Regenstein asked if the budget assumptions for Preschool For All might be negatively affected by a rate increase, or if keeping the two issues separate would make working on both more difficult. Ginger Ostro echoed his concerns, and asked why the Governor's Office of Management and Budget should consider the two issues separately instead of looking at them as funding for one early care and education system.
 - Senator Ronen commented that the programs will be funded from different sources of money, but that theoretically more money for child care rates may mean less money for Preschool For All. She suggested that separate paths with open communication might be needed.
 - Martina Casey stated that she is very concerned about a child care rate increase, as the rates for providers are now so low that many have difficulty earning enough money to stay in business or to purchase insurance coverage.
 - Jerry Stermer stated that he hoped that the Early Learning Council would articulate its support whether or not the two efforts are part of one cloth.
 - Judy Walker Kendrick reminded the Council that Preschool For All provides for three hours of preschool, and there will be many children who still need full day care because their parents are working.
 - Maria Whelan stated that the Council should affirm the importance of rate changes in the Preschool For All recommendations, and revisit where we are in nine months.
 - Harriet Meyer suggested that a Council member propose a motion so that language could be added into a formal incorporation of support for CCAP rates increases in Council reports.
 - Carolyn Newberry Schwartz reported she felt it was essential to maintain the message that early care and education are related.
 - Gwendolyn Kenner Johnson stated that the full rates report describes child care rates as a complement to Preschool For All. If rates are not adequate, for example, programs will not yield the quality of care and outcomes the Council is working to achieve through Preschool For All.
 - Representative Coulson reminded members that, although the Senators and Representatives involved with the Council understand the difference between early care and early education, many other members may find that distinction confusing. She encouraged members to devise a strategy that will not be confusing for legislators.
- **Preschool For All Budget Discussion**

Elliot Regenstein thanked Margie Wallen and Ginger Ostro for their work in creating preliminary Preschool For All budget estimates. He asked Senator Ronen to discuss the estimates and to lead a discussion about the costs estimates.

- Senator Ronen discussed the policy assumptions, rationales, and budget estimates for the Preschool For All program. She reviewed dollar amounts, estimated take up rates, and numbers of children proposed to participate in Preschool For All in different settings.
- Harriet Meyer commented that the budget estimates are based on sound methodology. She pointed out that the take-up rate projections are based on data from other states, and reminded members that the cost projections are based on the incremental cost of taking a program from its current level of quality to the quality standards of the Preschool For All recommendations.
- Elliot Regenstein stated that because of federal support for Head Start, the state support will be different in that program than in child care and prekindergarten. He also explained that new Preschool For All program budget projections include start-up costs that increase the amount budgeted.
- Ginger Ostro commented that the “cost per child” reflects direct service costs, and that other program infrastructure costs are added after the cost per child in different settings has been determined.
- Barbara Bowman asked if the budget estimates only reflected costs for center based child care. Margie Wallen responded that, although the budget estimates were based on a center-based model, there is great dedication among Council members to include licensed family child care providers. Harriet Meyer reminded members that all providers, regardless of setting, must have BA-level teachers providing the program in order to receive funding.
- Luz Maria Solis stated that there are large numbers of children, especially Latino children, who are not currently attending programs because they are on waiting lists in over-crowded schools and districts. Senator Ronen agreed that it will be important to look at unserved children and those who are underserved in their current setting.
- Mary Ellen Caron reported that schools are crowded in many places around the state, as are many community-based agencies in those communities. She expressed concern about the lack of capital for building facilities in the Preschool For All budget estimates. She also commented that these communities may want new Preschool For All programs to meet the needs of their residents, but may not have space in which programs can operate.
- Harriet Meyer reminded members that the budget estimates are reflective of the program for 3- and 4-year-olds, and that a set-aside for programs that serve children aged birth to three is included in the total budget projection. She reported that the Quality Committee suggested a set-aside of 15 percent of the total budget for birth to three programs, but that because of cost considerations the recommended set-aside remains at 11 percent.
- Phyllis Glink commended the Council for continuing to advocate for children birth to three. She reported that the birth to three set aside in the Early Childhood Block Grant is heralded across the country as a model of best practice.
- Constance Brown reported that she would rather see money budgeted to support education and training for teachers to provide services to English Language Learners instead of providing a salary differential to bilingual teachers. She felt that this strategy did not work well to attract and retain early childhood special education teachers years ago. Connie also stated that she saw no difference between bilingual and single language classrooms.
- Judy Johnson reported that in the education community, bilingualism is seen as an additional skill that not all teachers possess. Because of this, and because bilingual teachers must take

additional classes to be able to provide bilingual education, she is in favor of a salary differential.

- Ann Alvarez commented that teaching in a bilingual and bicultural classroom presents an additional educational challenge, warranting a salary differential for bilingual teachers.
- Lanita Koster reported that many skills lead to pay differences in different places. She stated that pay differentials will probably be negotiated at the local level, reflective of local differences. She commented that she thought it was good to have the extra money budgeted in the program cost estimates.
- Judy Walker Kendrick stated that the Council may also need to budget a salary differential for teachers who are willing to teach in hard-to-fill areas. Mary Ellen Caron agreed that perhaps a general “differential salary pot” of money was needed to meet the diverse needs of communities in Illinois.

Preschool For All Proposed Program Revisions

Harriet Meyer presented Preschool For All program components that were in need of resolution. She reported that more discussion was needed around the three issues described below:

1. Eliminating the upper income family tuition & tax deduction recommendation

- Elliot Regenstein reported that there was much discussion around the possibility of charging tuition and offering tax deductions to upper-income families. He stated that the Governor’s Office felt it was important that Preschool For All truly be a program for everyone, and that all children be eligible to participate without being charged fees. Because of this, the upper-income tuition and tax deduction recommendations were withdrawn.

2. Defining “at-risk” and determining eligibility during the Preschool For All phase-in period

- Harriet reminded members that at the last Council meeting there was a lot of discussion about the definition of “at-risk” and how eligibility during the Preschool For All phase in period would be determined so that at-risk children are served first.
- Defining “at-risk” comes into play in three areas of Preschool For All:
 1. serving at-risk children first in Preschool For All programs;
 2. offering a more intensive level of family support through the Family Resource Coordinator ratio of staff to children; and
 3. offering a more intensive level of specialized consultation for social and emotional development and managing difficult behaviors in the classroom.
- The Quality Committee defined “at risk” as including:
 - children involved with the Department of Children and Family Services,
 - children with disabilities,
 - children for whom English is a second language, and
 - children who are eligible for the Child Care Assistance Program or the free and reduced price lunch program.
 - In addition, up to 10% of children who do not meet the risk criteria could be included in Preschool For All during the phase in period in order to begin serving the children of working parents who are unable to afford high quality preschool education.
 - Lastly, 10% of children with risk factors other than those listed above could receive more intensive family support services to allow for local flexibility in identifying and serving children at risk of poor outcomes.

- Harriet stated that in regards to the priority to serve at-risk kids first, the Council had numerous discussions about the desire to balance the need to serve at-risk kids first while signaling that Preschool For All is a universal program for all children. Many members felt strongly for a host of different reasons that the program should start out serving children other than those at-risk. Others expressed concern that at-risk children must get served first since their ability to be successful in school hangs in the balance.
- Harriet asked Jerry Stermer to share a proposal discussed at the December Linkage & Integration Committee meeting that would allow for more flexibility. For the purposes of phase-in and intensive services from Family Resource Coordinators and mental health consultants, the Linkage and Integration Committee proposed that applicants be given a set of *examples* of at-risk criteria such as, but not limited to, those listed above. Applicants should be given the flexibility to define as “at-risk” children who present with other risk factors but who do not fit any of the above criteria.
- Kay Henderson asked if “children with disabilities” means only those children who have IEPs. Margie Wallen responded that that was the initial definition, but that a few of the committees recommended that the definition include children with developmental delays.
- Judy Walker Kendrick pointed out what she felt was a disconnect between phase-in priorities and the concept of providing a program to all eligible children. She asked for information on how programs will screen for children at-risk and still be available for all eligible children.
- Judy Johnson stated that “screening” could be accomplished in flexible ways, such as asking parents to fill out an application, and that programs could use information to determine at-risk status without doing developmental screenings.
- Kay Henderson agreed that there is a difference between screening for eligibility and screening for educational purposes. She remarked that a methodology for phase-in should be decided. She asked whether “at-risk” status will be determined by community demographics or by needs of individual children.
- Phyllis Glink reminded members that in order to conduct monitoring and evaluation, it will be necessary to collect good data about which children are being served.

3. Allowing flexible weekly Preschool For All program schedules to accommodate contract work rules

- Harriet Meyer reported that originally the Quality Committee recommended that Preschool For All sessions be 3 hours per day and meet 3, 4 or 5 days per week. After hearing from Constance Brown that this may present problems to teachers’ contracts, solutions to allow for more flexibility were discussed.
- Constance Brown stated that allowing local providers to decide how to provide the program within regulations that outline the minimum number of days and week for programs to meet could avoid contract problems.
- Lanita Koster reported that contracts are agreements between teachers’ unions and management. She stated that contracts can accommodate changes to work hour rules.
- Jerry Stermer replied that the Quality Committee recommended the program run for 3 hours a day because research indicates it is good for children. He stated that he hoped that the Council would encourage teachers to move from 2.5 to 3 hours of preschool provision, because, even though a minimum is being allowed, recommendations should still be directed by research and best practice.

- The revised recommendation is that Preschool For All meet at least 3 days a week for 9 hours minimum, with a maximum of 15 hours over 5 days. Some members asked questions about whether long days (example: 14 hours over 2 days) would be allowed. It was reiterated that programs would have to meet the day/hour recommendations and quality standards to be funded as Preschool For All sites.

Harriet Meyer asked for a voice vote to indicate if Council members support the changes to recommendations for the upper income family tuition and tax deduction, the definition for children at risk, and the minimum and maximum numbers of days and hours Preschool For All programs must meet. The revised recommendations were unanimously approved.

- **Next Steps and Timelines**

Elliot Regenstein stated that the Council's Preschool For All recommendations will be put together in a written report for consideration by Governor Blagojevich in early February. In addition, an effort to draft legislation that will reflect the Council's recommendations will also be undertaken. He assured members that they will have opportunities to provide feedback throughout the process, and that members may call him or Harriet Meyer to express concerns at any time. Harriet Meyer added that the Executive Committee will review the plan to ensure that it accurately reflects the recommendations of each committee. Maria Whelan advocated that all members be given the opportunity, within a limited timeframe, to review the plan document and express concerns. This request was accepted.

- **Adjournment**

Harriet Meyer adjourned the meeting at 11:38 a.m.

APPENDIX A

Recommendations for Consideration by the Early Learning Council from the Linkage & Integration Committee

Many children of all ages and economic backgrounds spend at least a portion of their time outside of parental care in license-exempt (family, friend and neighbor) home care settings. This type of care is generally arranged privately between parents and caregivers, making it difficult to know exactly how many children are affected. However, we do know that in June 2004, over 85,000 children served by Illinois' child care subsidy program received child care in license-exempt care settings. Nearly 13,000 of these children were 3-4 year olds and 18,500 were 0-3 year olds. These providers play an important role in the lives of these low-income children and countless other families. They are trusted by parents and often offer the flexibility needed, especially by parents with evening, weekend or varying work schedules. The quality of care and learning opportunities in these settings can significantly affect children's development and school readiness. Therefore, it is important that Illinois' early care and education systems research, develop, and expand programs that are designed to reach the children in this type of care, as well as the caregivers. Outreach to involve these children, their parents and caregivers is an important piece of any attempt to reach children "where they are."

Strategies to reach these children should include (1) working to decrease barriers to enrollment of these children in part-day early education programs in addition to the care they receive by their family,

friend or neighbor caregiver, and (2) the delivery of educational support programs that enhance the quality of care in license-exempt care settings. These strategies are not mutually exclusive and are likely to produce greater impact when delivered in combination. Further, these strategies may also be appropriate for children who are cared for in licensed family child care homes, but who may not receive additional school readiness services provided by Preschool For All in that setting.

I. Recommendations on eliminating barriers to part-day preschool enrollment:

Recommendation 1: Outreach

Preschool For All programs should develop effective strategies to conduct outreach to license-exempt caregivers to identify children in their community who may be eligible for a part-day Preschool For All program. Preschool For All programs should market their services as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, the care provided by the license-exempt caregiver. For example, outreach to grandparents providing care might emphasize the opportunity for respite for the caregiver as well as the educational opportunities for the child. Staff conducting the outreach must be familiar with and responsive to the community's culture and language.

Rationale: Existing marketing of programs targets parents. License-exempt caregivers are likely to be supportive of preschool enrollment; studies show they value education for the children in their lives. By developing relationships with these caregivers, programs can build upon the relationship between the caregiver and the parent to enhance the likelihood of children attending part-day early education programs.

Recommendation 2: Outreach/education

Efforts should be taken to publicize existing IDHS policy around full-day reimbursement and reassure caregivers participating in the Child Care Assistance program that participation in a part-day early education program by children they care for will not result in a reduction of their subsidy payment.

Rationale: The state has made important policy changes to remove the issue of loss of caregiver income as a barrier to enrollment in a part-day early education program, however, there is still confusion in the provider community about this.

Recommendation 3: Transportation

Provide transportation to Preschool For All programs.

Rationale: The lack of transportation is a major barrier to preschool enrollment for many children, whether they are cared for in their own home by parents or other caregivers, or outside the home in either licensed family child care or license exempt care. In license-exempt care settings, the caregiver may be a grandparent who is less physically able to transport the child or may care for a number of siblings, especially younger children, thereby making transportation very difficult.

Recommendation 4: Caregiver and parent participation in program activities

Preschool For All programs should invite and welcome the participation of license-exempt caregivers in family-oriented activities to the extent that it is allowable by liability and other program guidelines.

Rationale: Due to the demands of work and other responsibilities, parents may not be available to participate in important program-sponsored activities. Allowing extended family members or other caregivers to accompany children ensures that children can still receive the benefit of these

activities with an important adult in their lives and allows developmentally appropriate activities to be modeled for their caregivers.

Recommendation 5: Flexibility in services

Preschool For All programs should consider providing services at non-traditional hours of the day when locally appropriate. This could include intake and enrollment activities as well as actual program services. Programs should also consider providing services, as well as intake and enrollment activities, in “natural settings” within communities (e.g. apartment complexes, park districts).

Rationale: Working parents may need more flexible hours to complete the enrollment process. Varying the setting of enrollment activities and/or programs within communities may also create expanded opportunities for access to services.

In addition, the traditional half-day program delivered during school-day hours can be a barrier to participation when neither a parent nor caregiver is able to transport children to a program at those hours.

II. Recommendations on models for enhancing quality of care

Recommendation 6: Information sharing

Preschool For All programs should consider including license-exempt caregivers in information sharing agreements and encourage parents to share information related to children’s developmental needs with other caregivers.

Rationale: As a supplement to parental contact, and with a parent’s consent, sharing of information related to children’s developmental progress and needs with caregivers supports children’s healthy development. Information shared from programs can support caregivers in providing more individualized and effective care. For example, programs might share with caregivers learning activities suited to a particular child’s needs or behavior management techniques that have proven successful in the program setting.

Recommendation 7: Pilot funding

Preschool For All should provide funding to programs to deliver innovative educational support models for children in license-exempt homes. While these pilot programs would not receive the “Preschool For All” branding, they should still need to meet certain quality criteria to be eligible for funding. These criteria are:

- Utilize a research-based curriculum that provides for ongoing assessment of child progress. Curriculum should address age appropriate child development in the cognitive, language, social-emotional and motor domains, as well as health, safety and nutrition.
- Deliver services in a manner that is culturally and linguistically appropriate for the population served.
- Provide developmentally appropriate learning opportunities for children as well as modeling, information and support to caregivers.
- Offer developmentally appropriate equipment and supplies.
- Provide linkage and referral to developmental and health screenings.
- Participate in pilot program evaluation to document results. (See also Recommendation 8: Evaluation).

Other important issues to consider:

- Successful programs that support license-exempt caregivers have employed different strategies including group workshops, home visiting and distance learning.
- Programs should be encouraged to refer interested caregivers to an approved Level 1 credential trainer so that participating caregivers can obtain the credential if they choose.
- Opportunities should be available for linking license-exempt caregivers to other networks and supports, including mentoring by licensed caregivers.
- Success in recruiting caregivers to participate is related to (1) marketing programs as caregiver support rather than parenting education; and (2) the quality of outreach workers. Natural neighborhood leaders have been shown to be successful. Neighborhood licensed caregivers might be useful in this outreach capacity.

Rationale: License-exempt caregivers who choose to participate should be given the opportunity to receive supportive services and information to enhance the care they provide. If desired, this training should provide entry into the career lattice.

Recommendation 8: Evaluation

Steps should be taken to gather and disseminate information on the impact these innovative models have on school readiness indicators, both locally and nationally. If models are shown to have positive impacts on school readiness outcomes, the Preschool For All program should consider expanding funding to support those models.

Rationale: As more scientific data is gathered about effective strategies that impact school readiness outcomes for children in family, friend, and neighbor care settings, it may be necessary to alter the definition of the programs that can affect school readiness and, therefore, participate in Preschool For All.

Recommendation 9: Other linkages

Identify other community settings outside of center-based child care, Head Start and pre-kindergarten programs that could have positive impacts on children cared for in license-exempt settings and their caregivers. Build formal relationships between these settings and the more formal early care and education system. For example, provide a “traveling preschool” weekly at a local library, elementary school or park district that is open to all without regard to whether the attendee is a parent or a caregiver.

Rationale: These children and their caregivers are present in our communities and enhancement services can be provided where they are. By taking early learning experiences into natural settings in the community, programs can build bridges between the community members and formal early care and education settings.